



The Role of Governance in Combating Desertification

An event to mark the
International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD)

GTZ Haus, Berlin, September 7, 2006



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development



CCD Project
Convention Project to
Combat Desertification

This is a record of the proceedings of the conference "The Role of Governance in Combating Desertification", held in Berlin on September 7, 2006. The speeches and discussions have been edited for reasons of space.

The conference was held as part of Germany's contribution to the United Nations International Year of Deserts and Desertification 2006. The International Year aimed to raise public awareness and to protect the biological diversity of deserts, indigenous and local communities and the traditional knowledge of those populations affected by desertification.



www.iydd2006.de
www.iydd.org

This report seeks to inform and stimulate debate, but is not a statement of policy, and does not represent the official viewpoint of any of the convening organizations, nor of the organizations represented by speakers and conference participants.

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Foreword

Deserts are natural ecosystems, home to wildlife and vast landscapes. They have nurtured vibrant human cultures and inspired ancient faiths.

'Desertification', on the other hand, is man-made. It is caused by over-grazing, over-cultivation and poor irrigation. Desertification, increasing drought and soil erosion mean the gradual loss of villages, towns and ancestral homes. Desertification spells the end for millennial forests, grasslands, wells and watercourses, and the destruction of livestock, farms and human livelihoods.

More than one billion affected This dying of the land already affects one fifth of the world's population in more than 100 countries in Europe, North and South America and Asia as well as Africa. Spurred on by climate change, desertification in the poorest developing countries is fomenting war, hunger and uncontrollable mass migration – and it is gathering pace.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that desertification and drought are causing over \$42 billion in lost agricultural production every year.

On 17 June 2006, on the occasion of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that desertification was one of the gravest threats facing humankind. However, policymakers, national and local governments have been slow to respond, even though all agree the cause is unsustainable land use and despite the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)*, a tailor-made instrument to permit us collectively to confront the threat.

A potentially powerful weapon UNCCD entered into force in 1996. Focused essentially on developing countries, it offers a platform for effective environmental governance at national, regional and international levels. And if properly used, it could be a powerful weapon in the war against poverty and hunger.

* The UNCCD is one of the three major international environmental conventions, along with the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. All three were first signed at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992. www.unccd.int/convention/text/convention.php

The Convention's Key Aspects

- Binding under international law;
- Aims for systematic utilisation of existing experience;
- Stipulates use of National and (Sub-)Regional Action Programmes for its implementation;
- Promotes participation of affected populations and all key national actors;
- Calls for partnership agreements at national and international level, and for the creation of appropriate coordination structures (including donor coordination);
- Advocates for the integration of its Action Programmes into national investment programmes and strategies for development, including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs);
- Demands efficient utilisation of funds and mobilisation of innovative financing mechanisms;
- Calls for improved frameworks for sustainable natural resource management.

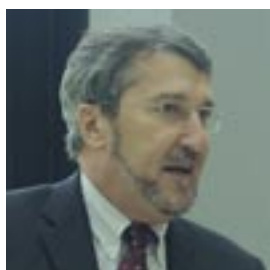
Yet UNCCD has been plagued by lack of implementation and underfunding. The text of the Convention lacks teeth and a feasible workplan. Despite UNCCD's ratification by the parliaments of more than 190 countries and over \$100 million invested by member countries so far, progress is hard to discern and, in some countries, disillusionment has started set in.

Taking stock, 10 years on However, the International Year of Deserts and Desertification in 2006 has marked a new departure. One of the many examples of this fresh determination to put the UNCCD to work was the Berlin conference. It brought together European and North American experts from the academic community, politics, government and development agencies to examine some of the root causes of the UNCCD's faltering progress. They included representatives of the UNCCD Secretariat in Bonn and, crucially, members of the Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG), an important body formed in 2005 and tasked with developing a 10-year strategic plan for the Convention.

Together, the conference participants highlighted the need for an effective legislative framework and laid out some steps for governments, both donors and recipients, to move from the general pledges of the past to legally-binding targets.

The GTZ was proud to host this important event. May the following conference deliberations help inform readers about some of the challenges of international cooperation and also aid the IIWG and all concerned parties in their efforts to bring about UNCCD's long-awaited – and urgently needed – implementation.

Germany's engagement



Erich Stather

Secretary of State, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

“Good governance means adequate framework conditions, appropriate fiscal instruments, responsible handling of funds, inclusion of civil society and improved training at national and international levels.”

Waging an effective fight against the spread of desertification is one of the greatest challenges in development politics today. The worst environmental changes brought on by desertification are happening in the poorest countries of the world. They affect first and foremost the most destitute of social groups. An estimated 40% of all Africans and Asians live in areas threatened by desertification; in Latin America, it is 30% of the population.

News stories of the last few months show the scale of the problem. A short time ago, for example, just one heavy dust storm dumped an estimated 300,000 tons of sand on Beijing. In its recently-published environmental white book, the Chinese government estimates the cost in environmental damage and lost resources at \$200 billion per year and even suggests that desert expansion could threaten Chinese economic growth in the medium term.

The outlook for Africa is equally bleak. UNEP's Africa Environment Outlook 2006 forecasts that the usable agricultural land in Africa will shrink by two-thirds by 2025, mainly through desertification. Given that up to 70% of the population depend on agriculture there, the implications are frightening.

Desertification is cross-border Global problems like desertification can only be resolved by global action, through multilateral agreements and within functioning international structures. We need to go beyond bilateral cooperation to find specific multilateral solutions for cross-border problems like land degradation.

“Good governance” here means adequate framework conditions, the use of appropriate fiscal instruments, the responsible handling of funds, the inclusion of civil society and better training at national and international levels. For more than 10 years the UNCCD has offered the outline of a global framework in the fight against desertification. This convention is not only remarkable because it was negotiated on the initiative of developing countries. It is also the most strongly worded agreement in the whole Rio process.

The UNCCD focuses explicitly on the protection of natural resources and the fight against poverty in the arid and semi-arid zones of the world. It obliges affected developing countries to design strategies against land degradation in so called “national action programmes” and to reconcile them with existing measures in the fight against poverty and safeguarding of food production. For their part, the industrialised nations are required to provide substantial financial contributions so that the proposed measures can be enacted.

Germany's role in the UNCCD process

As a party to the UNCCD, and as the country hosting the UNCCD Secretariat, Germany is committed to supporting the Convention's implementation. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) participates in several working bodies of the UNCCD and has aligned its assistance policy with the terms of the Convention. To that end, the BMZ has launched projects and programmes that help partner countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America to implement their respective National Action Programmes (NAPs). The GTZ's Convention Project to Combat Desertification (CCD Project) emerged from these activities.

The present danger But although the UNCCD has successfully anchored desertification in the global development debate, it is not at all sure that the Convention will mobilise additional financial resources.

Furthermore, only a few affected countries have managed to turn their national action programmes into successful strategies to fight poverty and safeguard food production. Though many mention the link between the spread of desertification and poverty in their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), they rarely reflect this in their concrete investment programmes.

So at the very moment when the Millennium Development Goal to halve extreme poverty and hunger by the year 2015 seems increasingly remote, especially in African dryland zones, and guiding frameworks are more sorely needed than ever, the UNCCD is threatening to slip from our grasp.

A 10-year strategy Broadly speaking, we are at present supporting approximately 680 anti-desertification projects worldwide with funds totalling about 1.8 billion euros. Given this engagement, and as host-nation of the UNCCD secretariat, Germany cannot accept the neglect of desertification any longer.

We want this UN convention finally to assume a central role in the debate on development aid. Our job from now on is to find ways to fight desertification more efficiently. I say this not least because Germany early this year became a member of the Intersessional Intergovernmental Working Group (IIWG), which has been charged by UNCCD member states with working out a 10-year strategy for better implementation of the Convention. The IIWG looks forward to using the results of today's meeting in its work.

Good governance is essential



Wolfgang Schmitt

Managing Director of German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)

Today's event, commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, or BMZ, is among the most important of many German contributions to the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. As the BMZ's operational arm, the GTZ stands for sustainable development, of which good governance is a central pillar.

Good governance is essential for poverty reduction, global peace and human progress. And good governance applies not only to the actions of governments but also to international political instruments like the three major UN conventions dealing with climate change, desertification and biodiversity.

The world's environmental problems can only be successfully tackled by the application, through such instruments, of the principles of good governance: clear analysis, coherent action, transparency and sound management. The GTZ seeks to enact these principles in our everyday work in countries around the world.

“GTZ stands for sustainable development, of which good governance is a central pillar.”

Session 1

What desertification means for industrialised countries

There is a widening gap between the words and deeds of the developed world when it comes to implementing the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD). Relevant funding by bilateral and multilateral donors has been steadily shrinking. How to reverse this trend?

Controlling desertification: An essential element of global governance



Prof. Klaus Töpfer

Former Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Desertification is not just a problem for the poor in the developing world. It afflicts North America, Southern Europe and China as well. The UNCCD is one of the three Rio Conventions on climate change, biodiversity loss and desertification, but has failed to excite the sort of political and public interest enjoyed by the other two.

“We know the questions, but do we still have the right answers?”

Desertification has barely registered in the minds of the wider public, and it would be unfortunate if we do not use the present opportunity to find better ways to get the message out. Because the notion that desertification is something that is happening far away, and therefore of little relevance to us, is plain wrong. Today, desertification is also spreading in Europe. Your colleagues in Spain, Italy or Greece will tell you the desert is coming closer. It is a mistake – indeed, a gross misapprehension – to see UNCCD as a convention for Africa alone.

Enough of diagnosis Again and again, we seem to be fixated on diagnosis alone, underlining it and consolidating it with new figures in an effort to make it ever more accurate. Just look at the usual 500-page study: the first 450 pages are given over to the diagnosis, and the last 50 pages will tell you why there is still no available treatment.

“No-one can deny the close interactions between desertification and climate change. When we talk about carbon sinks, we are talking about the very soil under our feet.”

We must now move from analysis to action.

How does desertification fit into the general architecture of global environmental governance? As we know, it all started in Rio in 1992. The three major conventions – the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) and the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) – are collectively called the Rio Conventions.

But the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification somehow did not quite fit in. Though everyone in Rio agreed on it in principle, I remember just how tough the final negotiations were in Paris, where it was largely thanks to outstanding personalities like Ambassador Bo Kjellén* that the convention was finally established at all.

Time for a re-think Let us also remember the discussions back then on CCD’s financial mechanism. There was the urgent offer from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to serve as the financing mechanism for the CCD, but the final discussion round in Paris firmly turned it down. However, I have just returned from a GEF meeting in South Africa where discussions strongly indicated that we should revisit this idea.

We need to analyse how to incorporate a CCD-specific financial mechanism into the convention. From the beginning, the GEF was the chosen financial mechanism for the two other Rio Conventions, but not for the CCD. Was this the right decision?

The three Rio Conventions are directly connected with each other. No-one can ignore the links between desertification and biodiversity. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment offers one of the best analyses how this works in dryland ecosystems. And no-one can deny the close interactions between biodiversity and climate change. When we talk about carbon sinks, we are talking about the very soil under our feet.

Everyone knows about climate change. As for biodiversity, the CBD at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg got a strategic plan for full implementation by 2010. And President Jacques Chirac himself took charge of a major international conference in France in 2005 on the science and governance of biodiversity.

Soil is lost forever In comparison, public awareness of desertification and its impact on soils is disappointingly slight. For me, one of the most important failings of environmental policies is that soil has such a low status. What is more, it is incomprehensible. I have always said that if you have a polluted river you can clean it by investing, for example, in sewage treatment plants.

But in contrast to the rivers, once soils are destroyed you cannot get them back. If ecosystems degrade to the point where they are unable to secure the soil, we lose the soil forever to wind and water erosion.

When I was UNEP Executive Director in Nairobi, I used to cite the example of Kenya’s Masinga dam. This was completed in 1985 with an initial capacity of 1.5 million cubic meters. But from 1985 to 2005, that capacity shrank to less than 1 million cubic meters. Why? Simply because the land-use system in the catchments area was hit by reduced coffee prices, which meant, in turn, the disappearance of terraced cultivation and the deforestation of the last remaining woodlands. As a result, it was impossible to keep the soil from being washed away. The 500,000 missing cubic meters in Masinga’s capacity taken up by the soil washed down from further upstream and now settled at the bottom of the reservoir. You can not just dig it out and bring it back to where it was.

The consequences are staring us in the face. We speak about natural catastrophes, for example, when citing the recent drought in the Horn of Africa. But the evolving situation shows that in many cases it is more like a cycle of severe droughts and

* Former Chief Climate Negotiator, Sweden

devastating floods, because the capacity of the soils to hold water has been lost through man-made alterations affecting land-use systems. It is the same pattern wherever we interfere with nature. Look at the recent flood damage in Europe due to our straightening-out of the riverbeds. The incidence of this sort of “natural” catastrophe will increase dramatically.

The pitfalls of “reaction conventions” Is it really right to have three separate UN conventions on the environment? If we are honest with each other, we have to admit that most environmental conventions so far have been more or less short-term responses to immediate and pressing problems.

Look at the genesis of the 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, what I call a typical “reaction convention”. It sought a quick answer to our hazardous waste problem by opportunistically using the East-West rapprochement that was then underway to ship our dangerous rubbish to Eastern Europe. You might remember the upshot: as Germany’s Minister for the Environment, I had to travel to Romania in person to get those barrels of waste back.

The same unseemly haste gave rise to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) as well as the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure (PIC) for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade, both of which address the dilemma of hazardous industrial waste disposal. Would it not be worth considering a “chemical cluster” of conventions? This would be to ask the Conferences of Parties not so much to merge them into one as to find ways to streamline their application more efficiently.

Can we find economies of scale? While each of the Rio Conventions overlap with another, each one of them offers something unique. There is nothing to stop the Conferences of Parties from working on an “environmental cluster”, and seeking economies of scale.

Take the example of the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam treaties. The reality, in developing countries, in Kenya, say, or Burkina Faso, is that you will not find many specialists in persistent organic pollutants, or on pesticides, or on hazardous wastes. You would be lucky to find even a group of two or three experts. What is needed here is training.

That is easier said than done, and much of the problem starts with us here the industrialised countries. Responsibility for the different conventions in our countries is often dispersed across several ministries. For example, the Rotterdam Convention is often handled by ministries of agriculture, while the ministries of health are more likely to deal with the Stockholm Convention on POPs.

Why can we not create a single focal point for these three conventions to enhance their complementarity? Is there not some scope for economies of scale in the administrative and communications work that needs to be done? Can we not meet the taxpayers objections that the same work is being done three times over? How can we develop such systems? And how can they be made to apply to all the Rio Conventions?

Learning from the IPCC’s success At the Paris conference I mentioned, President Chirac called for a global dialogue between scientists, political decision-makers, representatives of civil society and economic players from both South and North, a new kind of international mechanism for the biodiversity convention which would be similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Let us think about that proposal. The main difference between the so-called “subsidiary

“Why can we not create a single focal point for these three conventions to enhance their complementarity? Is there not some scope for economies of scale in the administrative and communications work that needs to be done?”

“One hectare of wetlands in Canada can hold \$6,000 worth of water per year, whereas the yield of that same hectare under intensive land use would be only \$500.”

bodies” of the Rio Conventions and the IPCC is that in the second, only scientists are involved, whereas the first puts the scientists in close contact with the various actors for political implementation.

I believe that a major reason why there is so much going on under the Climate Convention is precisely because of the involvement of the IPCC. Could we not develop a structure for the CCD that is similar to the IPCC to allow better engagement with policy?

If we are not prepared to go for a clustering of the Rio conventions, then how can we identify more clearly their interdependencies and complementarities, so that we can build on them and escape from our counterproductive sectoral blindness. If we present this as a holistic approach to enhance efficiency and improve outputs, it would also be much easier to attract the funding for it.

The CCD: Use it or lose it State Secretary Erich Stather said in his earlier speech: “The link between the spread of deserts and poverty is mentioned in many poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), but rarely reflected in concrete investment programmes.” Exactly. If we do not effectively transform a convention’s promises into action, we will lose the convention. It is as simple as that.

This is about investment, about allocating limited resources. It is not decided by the Ministry of the Environment or Agriculture, but by the Ministry of Finance or at cabinet level. You will not achieve a thing by telling this demanding audience that the wetlands are important, that they provide a habitat for many endangered species and that on top of that they are lovely to look at. But if you demonstrate, in dollars or in euros, how the investment you need is highly relevant to the water policy of the country concerned and that the returns are higher than for competing projects, then you are relevant.

The 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, in which UNEP played an important part, did not just set out a new laundry list of problems. Instead, we assessed the current value of our environmental and natural capital. What has happened to it? Why is it declining? What is the value of ecosystem services, and how can we translate them into financial terms? We offered useful examples, such as the fact that one hectare of wetlands in Canada can hold \$6,000 worth of water per year, whereas the yield of that same hectare under intensive land use would be only \$500.

Many have said that nature is the capital of the poor. And the most fundamental capital here is the soil. If we are unable to conserve our soils we will face severe problems with all other aspects of nature’s capital, in all ecosystems. This needs to be tackled in a systematic way, and with rigour.

Ideas for new indicators I am of the opinion that for many products, for example consumer goods, we should add a key new label for the intensity of its CO₂ emission. This can be done. Supermarket labelling should do more than indicate the price and provenance. Why not include labels on CO₂ intensity of the product, and whether the producer has got a CO₂ account. Without wanting to understate the many issues this raises, I think that it is practicable, it is easy to understand, and consumers will know what they are getting.

Many years ago, Albert Einstein handed his students an exam paper. After a short while, a student came forward and said: “But Prof. Einstein, these are the same questions you asked four years ago.” And Einstein answered: “You are quite right, but in the meantime I have found different answers”.

Precisely my point. The central questions are clear. Our job now is to keep asking ourselves: “These have been our answers so far, but are we sure they are still the best?”

Desertification's refugees I believe that we must stop our disjointed approach to the conventions. This would not only save money and resources, it would increase the quality of the policies that flow from them. If we do not act against desertification and the destruction of soils, the consequences for us will be dire indeed.

Already today, environmental refugees – refugees fleeing desertification – greatly outnumber those fleeing from war, ethnic confrontation and persecution. Growing desertification will only worsen this trend. If you can show ordinary Germans or other Europeans that 1,900 desperate African refugees came ashore in the Canary Islands in the last weekend alone, you are likely to convince them that investment and development cooperation in these countries will have a high return. More patrol boats watching our coastlines is not the answer. All that is between us is the Mediterranean Sea.

I often notice how the same term can mean two different things, depending where you are standing in the world. Talk about nutritional policy in our countries, and you are talking about strategies to prevent our children from becoming obese. Mention the same thing in the Third World, and you are talking about 800 million starving people. Mention family planning in developing countries and you mean the need to have fewer children. Say family planning in our countries, on the other hand, and you mean the need to have more.

I say again, all that is between us is the Mediterranean Sea.

Migration and desertification



Dr Imme Scholz

Head of Department, Environmental Policy and Management of Natural Resources, German Development Institute (DIE)

Illegal immigration, especially from Africa and the Middle East, is looming ever larger in discussions over the security of Europe. Public awareness of it is growing, heightened by TV footage of desperate refugees from North Africa washing up on our shores. This migration from sub-Saharan Africa is prompted by many factors, one being deteriorating living conditions in rural areas due to progressive desertification and loss of soil fertility.

“In the future, will we speak of environmental migrants or of refugees?”

Desertification, migration and conflict are closely connected to questions of governance. Bad governance in the affected developing countries is hastening desertification. Weak governance structures are also to blame for much of the conflict arising from migration.

Migration is a form of self-help. People in dryland areas are used to coping with fragile soils and scarce water. Soil erosion, worsening drought and lack of water mean dwindling crop yields and food insecurity. In the absence of assistance from government, the obvious response by populations to desertification is simply to move away from it.

Distinctions are blurring We should distinguish between seasonal and catastrophe-induced migration on the one hand, and permanent migration on the other. However, it is sometime hard to tell the two apart, because both can occur at the same time. And to complicate things further, the nature of permanent migration is changing. Yet whatever definitions are used, UNEP's Millennium Ecosystem Assessment unequivocally points to increased soil degradation and desertification as the main causes

“The total value of remittance payments from developing-country migrants is more than twice – indeed, almost three times – as large as the amounts transferred to these countries by development aid.”

of the growing outflow of people from dryland areas.

Soil degradation and desertification especially hit poor families who rely entirely on agricultural production. For the subsistence farmers, it means they can not grow enough to feed themselves. For the farmers with access to markets, it means no crops to sell, collapsing family income and a growing inability to buy food or, indeed, anything else.

Three-quarters of the dryland areas in Africa used for agriculture are already degraded. Some countries in Latin America face similar situations. It is not hard, then, to imagine how many people are facing environmental migration – or soon will be.

Migration is only a safe and reliable coping mechanism when conditions are relatively predictable. But progressive desertification and an increase in number and severity of droughts due to climate change is putting the old coping mechanism under serious strain. That explains why migration is much more widespread – and visible – than in the past.

The lifeline of remittances Look at Mali, a country of the Sahel region. Empirical studies there demonstrate that migration from rural into urban areas is in response to drought. Rural people move to where there is more food, and survive there until the drought is over. The data from Mali shows that drought-induced rural migration into cities soared between the 1960s and the early 1980s. It also shows, tellingly enough, that 63% of the families studied during Mali’s big drought from 1983 to 1985 survived only thanks to the remittances they received from relatives working and living in Europe. This indicates that, when other remedial measures fail, migrating to Europe is one of the few options left.

Another study comes from the Tambacounda region in Senegal, an agricultural area that covers one-third of the country and produces mainly groundnuts and cotton. There, the continuous degradation of the soil has meant that, in order to provide financially for their families, people have had to permanently move away from home – not only to Dakar and other cities in Senegal, but also to neighbouring countries and even more distant parts of Africa.

In Tambacounda, remittances from these migrants make up 75% of household incomes. Yet this should not surprise us, given the last UN report on migration: the total value of remittance payments from developing-country migrants is more than twice – indeed, almost three times – as large as the amounts transferred to these countries by development aid.

Natural and man-made Sudden natural disasters can be an important cause of environmental migration. This need not be permanent, because the evidence to date suggest that, often, the migrants eventually return to their homes. However, we soon might have to revise this picture. Long-term environmental changes that cause repeated drought, storms or flooding may in turn trigger permanent migration.

Man-made catastrophes like Chernobyl, along with other toxic accidents or natural catastrophes that permanently pollute whole regions or make them uninhabitable, are another cause of refugees and permanent migration. And finally, since I am addressing the development community here, let’s not forget that large projects in ecologically fragile regions can also lead to migration movements, and a possible worsening of desertification.

Broadly speaking, there are 25 million people in the world today who can be categorised as environmentally displaced, meaning forced by environmental causes to leave their homes. That is significantly more people than war refugees.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded in its third

“Already adept at competing for resources, the migrants are a significant threat for the residents in destination areas. Add in ethnic tensions or border conflicts and you set the scene for confrontation.”

Desertification and migration

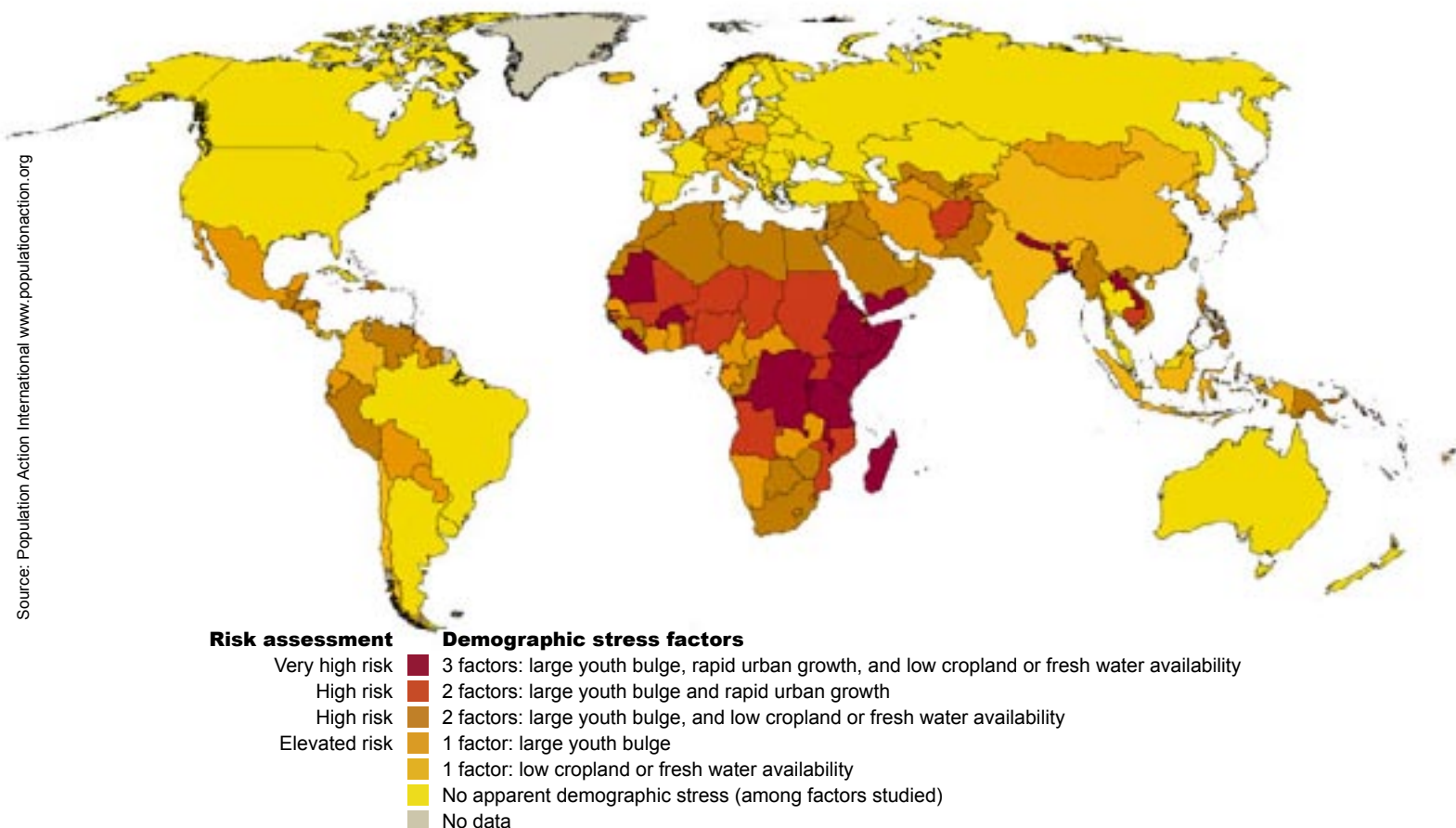
The map shows the risk potential of countries based on demographic stress and resource availability

report that climate change and soil erosion will swell that number to 150 million people by 2050. Not all will be fleeing desertification. For example, some will be coastal dwellers, forced from their homes by rising water levels. But we must assume that a significant number will be people from rural areas.

Who are the migrants? Research shows that they are mostly young, those with their lives ahead of them and usually stronger and more resourceful than the old to cope with the rigours of migration. While it is sometimes true that resource-poor people migrate more easily than those with money, Africans migrating to Europe are usually not poor farmers but rather people from the cities who have already accumulated enough money to pay the organised people-smuggling rings and cover the other costs of their escape. The resource-poor migrants, for their part, have few options but to move much shorter distances away.

Desertification can also be a dangerous mechanism for the transmission of conflict. Environmental migration means hardship not only for the people who have to leave their homes to seek a new living, but also for those already living in the regions into which they move.

Already adept at competing for fertile land, water, food and other resources in their homelands, the migrants are a significant threat for the residents in destination areas. Add in ethnic tensions or border conflicts, for example, and you set the scene for confrontation. Look no further than Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia and neighbouring countries, and especially Sudan, where you find all the ingredients for polarisation and violence: severe soil degradation, lack of water, and animosity between settled and nomadic population, between Africans and Arabs.



Risk of spreading conflict There are many countries in the high-risk category. Without immediate action, the risks to their security will only grow, affecting not only the local populations but also neighbouring countries. We have to assume that environmental stress and water scarcity will only increase the potential for migration and conflict in these countries and regions.

The high-risk countries are mainly in North and Sub-Saharan Africa and in the Horn of Africa. All have a high rural proportion to their total populations and a low ratio of agricultural land per capita. Half of them have very limited fresh-water resources, which predicts increased competition for them between households, industry, tourism and agriculture. All belong to the poorest in the world. And they exhibit weak governance structures, meaning a lack of present ability to deal with their problems and most likely even less ability to do so in the future.

The CCD is an important convention because it is the first to recognise the causal linkages between environment degradation and migration. We must place more emphasis on the implementation of its articles. For example, implementation of Article 10.3 on National Action Programmes so far has focused much more on biophysical causes of desertification than on the social or economical consequences. Implementing the CCD is crucial to reducing the risk of conflict in Africa and Asia.

We do not yet know whether climate change will lead to rapid, catastrophic destruction of ecosystems, accompanied by torrents of displaced people, or only to gradual deterioration and slowly-growing migration. In the future, will we speak of migrants or of refugees?

Desertification and climate change – Do complex causes call for complex solutions?



Dr Richard Klein

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Even if all agreed preventive measures are taken, we probably will not prevent global warming of 1.5 to possibly even 6 degrees centigrade in the coming decades. Industrialised countries will face demands from the worst-hit developing countries for compensation and assistance to adapt to the changes and mitigate their effects.

“Climate change is an important threat to development.”

Atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, the most important greenhouse gas, were stable for thousands of years. Since 1850, the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, carbon dioxide concentrations have increased. Presently, atmospheric CO₂ is measured at about 380 parts per million (ppm). Estimates vary by how much it will grow in the 21st century, with the more pessimistic scenarios predicting a concentration of up to 1,000 ppm.

Whatever the figures, most now agree that there is a clear link between human activities and the changing climate. The problem has been caused primarily by the industrialised world. Yet the worst impacts will be felt in developing countries. While optimists forecast an average increase in global temperatures of only 1.5 degrees centigrade and others project as much as 6 degrees, those are average projected increases, meaning that some parts of the world, especially the Arctic and Antarctic regions, could see a 10 degree rise by the end of this century.

“Adaptation has been viewed as politically incorrect, because it means accepting that there is no complete solution to the problem.”

No more snows of Kilimanjaro? Let us consider the recorded evidence of the last century. In the Sahel zone there has been a clear drying trend. Elsewhere in Africa, a lack of weather observation stations means a lack of statistics, but there is visual evidence. At the beginning of the 20th century, photographs show the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro covered with ice and snow. By 2002, there was hardly any left. The expectation is that in 10 to 15 years Kilimanjaro will be bare of snow. Another example is the gradual disappearance, over the last 40 years, of Lake Chad.

And Africa is not only vulnerable to droughts. There is increased risk of floods in the coastal plains due to sea-level rise; deforestation and degradation of woodlands and even due to the impact of cyclical warming and cooling of the Pacific Ocean, known as El Niño and La Niña. The El Niño Southern Oscillation affects temperature and rainfall – and thus the livelihoods of subsistence farmers – in Southern and Eastern Africa. The 4th assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), due in 2007, will no doubt offer another sobering summary of what we have learned over the last five years.

Among other things, it is becoming increasingly clear that climate change is an important threat to development. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), one of the Rio Conventions, is therefore not just about the environment, it is also very much a development convention. Climate change can threaten water supply, food security, human health, natural resources, protection against natural hazards and more. Climate change is a global problem, but in the least developed countries (LDCs) problems are particularly immediate and urgent. Must there really be a trade-off between climate policy and development policy? I would argue that the two are not in conflict. They are parallel, mutually reinforcing processes.

“Anthropogenic interference” The ultimate objective of the UNFCCC is to achieve stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent “dangerous anthropogenic (meaning man-made) interference with the climate system”. Climate scientists have been trying to define “dangerous anthropogenic interference” for the last 15 years.

There are two main branches of climate policy. One is mitigation, which means reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing carbon sinks, thus trying to reduce human interference. The other is adaptation, which means preparing for and coping with the impacts, thus reducing the vulnerability of people to climate change. The distinction between mitigation and adaptation has been very marked in climate policy. And to some extent, this has not been very helpful.

Until fairly recently, the main focus of climate policy was on mitigation, aimed at trying to solve the problem. Academics have largely followed this policy lead, focusing hard on mitigation and investigating, for example, energy policies and land-use strategies. Discussion of adaptation, on the other hand, was often considered a distraction from mitigation. Adaptation has been viewed as politically incorrect, because it implies accepting that there is no complete solution to the problem.

But this is changing. Adaptation science and policy, though still in their infancy, are growing quite rapidly. We now recognise that adaptation is as important as mitigation. Because even if we all stop emitting CO₂ right now, climate change is coming and we will have to adapt to it.

Two separate paths The UNFCCC makes a distinction between man-made climate change and natural climate variability that has been happening over centuries, including the El Niño phenomenon. Both cause droughts, floods and other impacts, impelling people to take action to reduce their vulnerability. There is a lot of knowledge

“We now recognise that adaptation is as important as mitigation. Because even if we all stop emitting CO₂ right now, climate change is coming and we will have to adapt to it.”

and empirical evidence on how people cope with natural climate variability and how effective it is. Coping with climate variability is key to development, as well as a first step to adapting to climate change. However, for way too long, climate policy and development policy have followed separate paths.

Adaptation is finally receiving more attention both from scientists and from policy makers. More money is flowing into adaptation projects, although it is still very little compared to what goes into mitigation. And to put things in perspective, the money going into mitigation, in turn, is a tiny sum compared to what goes into foreign direct investment. Adaptation is finally receiving more attention both from scientists and from policy makers. There is more money flowing into adaptation projects, although it is still peanuts compared to what goes into mitigation. And to put things in perspective, the money going into mitigation, in turn, is peanuts compared to what goes into foreign direct investment.

The LDCs argued for immediate action on adaptation. At the 7th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 2001, the Parties decided to support the LDCs in developing National Adaptation Programmes of Action, or NAPAs, much in the way the UNCCD is facilitating the development of National Action Programmes (NAPs). The guidelines for preparing NAPAs recognize the urgent and immediate needs of LDCs in adapting to current and projected adverse effects of climate change.

Emerging NAPAs The first NAPAs that have been finalised, for example from Mauritania, Niger and Malawi, are very explicit about linking climate variability and climate change. They also offer a country-driven list of priorities, an overview of how LDCs expect to be affected by climate change and how action can be taken now to reduce their vulnerability.

There is clear potential here for synergies within the LDCs between adaptation, combating desertification and sustainable development. But the fragmentation of international policy and the lack of funding under the UNFCCC and the UNCCD are making this very difficult indeed. In addition, there is a need for official development assistance to complement funds from the Global Environment Facility.

A change of heart In 2000, the GTZ asked me to identify development projects that were being funded by the German government and that already included activities related to adaptation to climate change. I also was asked to identify opportunities to incorporate adaptation into future German development projects, and to enhance awareness of it within the relevant parts of the German government.

I selected five thematic areas that focus on natural resource management. I screened the documents for 136 projects, and chose five for in-depth analysis. In 2001, I talked to the project managers and found that people were indeed aware that climate change and current climate conditions were important for natural resource management in Africa. However, they had little patience for questions about the potential impact of climate change on project implementation.

Things have changed though. The GTZ has made a big effort to engage both developing-country partners and headquarters in “mainstreaming”, which means integrating climate-change policies and measures into wider sectoral planning and management to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of development investments.

How “mainstreaming” works How can adaptation to climate change be “mainstreamed” into sectoral planning and development? Suppose a climate forecast

“Donors should provide expertise as well as money and become actively involved with the climate-change community.”

shows that peak run-off in a certain river is likely to increase, which could wash away the bridges. Mainstreaming would be to agree on building those bridges stronger and higher so they will not be washed away.

But there is more to it than that. Adaptation will not suffice as a purely technical solution. People are vulnerable not just because the rising river will sweep the bridge away, but because their living conditions make them vulnerable in the first place. To be effective, adapting to climate change must tie in with local conditions and cultural sensitivities and also address the non-climate factors that cause vulnerability.

Incorporating climate change into development is a real challenge. Mainstreaming adaptation so that it actually reduces people's vulnerability will require donors to draw on their 40-odd years of development assistance experience, and to provide expertise as well as money to become actively involved with the climate-change community.

Will climate change issues mean stronger emphasis on the management of natural resources in development policy? Or, as some fear, will too much mainstreaming lessen the urgency of adapting to climate change? A number of new initiatives are underway that may provide some answers.

New initiatives The Vulnerability and Adaptation Resource Group* is an informal body of multilateral and bilateral agencies, including the BMZ, who are seeking to raise awareness of the links between climate change and development within their agencies and the climate policy process as a whole. A joint report called “Poverty and Climate Change: Reducing the Vulnerability of the Poor through Adaptation” has had an important impact on the negotiations after Marrakech. The relevance of adaptation and its links to development are now much more clearly recognised than a few years ago.

* See www.climatevarg.org

The Global Environment Facility, too, has begun to prioritise climate-change adaptation, as well as support synergistic projects combining climate change, desertification and biodiversity. An example is the “Coping with Drought” project, funded under the GEF's Special Climate Change Fund but with direct relevance to desertification.

But challenges remain. As we all know, one is the disjointed nature of the Rio Conventions. Another is follow-up funding. LDCs are finalizing their NAPAs. Each has a list of priorities. Will the NAPAs feature prominently in the PRSPs, the countries' own poverty reduction strategy papers? Many would say that PRSPs are the only documents that donors read and take seriously.

And what about the future, after Kyoto, after 2012? Will India, China and other big emerging economies reduce their greenhouse gas emissions if there is no reward for doing so, some inflow of funds to help with adaptation? These and other questions are currently at the heart of discussion on long-term cooperative action to address climate change, implement the UNFCCC and advance development goals in a sustainable way.



Session 2

Quo vadis: What course for UNCCD implementation?

The Seventh Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-7), held in Nairobi in October, 2005, set up the Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) to develop a draft ten-year strategic plan for CCD implementation. Germany championed the establishment of this working group and is now a member of it. This conference session brought together leading international experts to help formulate Germany's input.

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Alternatives for compliance and enforcement in global environmental policies



Prof. Durwood J. Zaelke

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The odds on CCD becoming national law will be improved by greater focus on its “domestication”, meaning the ways it is incorporated into a given country’s legal system. What can we learn from the experience of CCD’s sister conventions? What sort of incentives can make participation in the implementation process more attractive to governments?

“The key tool of governance is the law, which society must both observe and police.”

When I flew here yesterday from the United States, they were playing Al Gore’s movie “An inconvenient truth”, which is very good. But as an environment lawyer, I was a little disappointed because he talks a lot about the science, a little about politics and not at all about the law.

As Hernando de Soto said, “law is the architecture for sustainable development”. Law is our key governance tool. But for the law to be successful and solve our environmental problems, the law has to work. That means it has to change behaviour. The rule of law, good governance and sustainable development are all necessary but

*See www.inece.org

*Prof. Michael E. Porter and Claas van der Linde theorised that properly-designed environmental regulations trigger innovations by companies that can offset the costs of complying with these regulations or even make compliance profitable. See http://www.inece.org/mlw/Chapter13_PorterHypothesis.pdf

“Compliance isn’t just a problem of developing countries. And a lot of our environmental problems are cross-border in nature.”

insufficient conditions for achieving sustainable development. Along with them, we need compliance. This is the purpose of the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement, or INECE*.

INECE has a global network of about 4,000 practitioners in more than 150 countries. We are involved in what is known as capacity-building, or training, in the rule of law, enforcement and compliance, and also in enforcement cooperation, where we work with countries to coordinate their efforts to tackle regional and global problems, for example the shipment of hazardous wastes or the cross-border trade in endangered wildlife. And we focus especially hard on raising awareness of the problems as well as the benefits of compliance, for example, the well-documented phenomena of innovation offsets, as described by the Porter Hypothesis* and also captured in the 2005 Prague Statement by the heads of European environmental protection agencies. Firms can make money by complying with the right kind of environmental laws if we design them properly.

A recent US study showed that 96% of dry cleaning business in Los Angeles were out of compliance with the law. The figure for dry cleaners in a similar UK study was 80%. So compliance isn’t just a problem of developing countries. And a lot of our environmental problems are cross-border or global in nature. To address them, we have to turn to international law. The tool of choice is the Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA), of which the CCD is one example.

Difficult “domestication” Unfortunately, the world is not yet ready to give MEAs the legal teeth or the international human resources to stand on their own. To make an MEA effective, it has to be “domesticated” by national law. That means ratification by national parliaments and adoption by law-enforcement agencies and the judiciary. So for now, we have to view MEAs as coordinating mechanisms and depend on national law to put them into effect. And as we all know, domesticating an MEA is especially difficult in a weak or failed state with rampant corruption and no proper legal system.

I have been asked to consider two issues. Can we bring any of the compliance and enforcement strategies into the Convention on Desertification? And are there other key actors that we might empower further?

In countries that have good, strong rule of law, a domesticated MEA gives you the same full range of enforcement options as any other national law. You can use your own inspectors, prosecutors and sanctions, and, in many countries, even fine people or put them in jail for non-compliance.

Obligations and standards Compliance with, and enforcement of, any Multilateral Environmental Agreement, or MEA, starts with three international obligations. The first is your obligation to the entire international community to implement the treaty that you, as a state, have signed and ratified. The second is to ensure that your national laws comply with it. And the third is to do your reporting back to the relevant treaty body.

Even if these obligations are not clearly and precisely stated in the MEA – as is the case with the CCD – you can still progressively clarify and specify them. You must set clear standards for all those actors who have to change their behaviour. They need to understand exactly what is expected of them so that the regulators themselves can determine compliance or non-compliance. This can be done, for example, through describing good practices from elsewhere and through precise articulation of guidelines.

And once these standards are set, there are two basic strategies to use. The first one is the logic of consequences. In summary, this means that you establish penalties

or sanctions for violating legal standards, you increase the risk that the relevant actors will be caught if they violate them, and then you publicize this to create a general deterrent.

Of course, this presupposes that you have sanctions to fall back on. The CCD is silent on the subject of sanctions. However, at a minimum, you can still publicly name and shame the offenders for non-compliance. You can also change the cost-benefit analysis for people by offering compliance assistance, for example with advice, technology or funding. The Convention could look at these things more carefully.

The second strategy for changing behaviour is the logic of appropriateness, where law becomes a normative and moral force*, and thus legitimate and appropriate. Compliance in this case is more cooperative because the law is perceived as clear and fair. Law that apply to environmental issues can strengthen, activate and build our social norms. The Convention could look at both of these theories and consider how to promote them, boldly and without waiting for approval from the Conference of the Parties (COP). The publicity from such initiatives could be very helpful.

More parliamentary oversight To empower key actors, let us consider what states themselves can do when they making laws. States have unlimited scope within the bounds of their respective constitutions. There is a lot of potential in encouraging them to do much more through their national action plans (NAPs), through national legislation and their parliaments.

Parliaments are the ones who domesticate the law and approve the budgets. They have to make the trade-offs, at national level, on how and where they allocate the resources. And parliaments are the ones with oversight responsibility. So another thing that the Convention on Desertification could do is to promote more parliamentary oversight. This is not done nearly enough around the world, especially in developing countries.

In the United States, following the mid-term election in November, 2006, we will see Congressional oversight start again on environment and many other issues. Elsewhere, we could think about pioneering regional oversight hearings. Parliaments from a group of similarly-situated countries could convene joint oversight hearings. This could be a very interesting institutional innovation. Of course, it takes us back to the need for capacity-building, training, finding ways of getting around often-corrupt systems to develop better social norms.

Human rights and wildlife groups Other key actors are human rights organisations, with their focus on the right to land, water, health and remedial action. And there are the wildlife institutions, who are going to be hammered by land degradation and who have their own political power. I have just started working with a group called The International Fund for Animal Welfare*. I had never heard of them in my previous 30 years of doing this work, but they are a group with a budget in the tens of millions of dollars per year, offices in 14 countries and they are very strong on legal strategies.

Another adventurous idea for the negotiations on climate change and the other MEAs would be to have a specific negotiating block for desertification. In the early days of the climate negotiations I helped create a group called AOSIS, the Alliance of Small Islands States. We got a grant from the Ford Foundation and used that to help provide legal advice to small island states. AOSIS have built up their political power and kept a tight focus on the issue up to this day. So desertification could do more than just coordinate different secretariats. It could move into the negotiating room, as well. I think that could be quite powerful.

* For more, see www.inece.org/mlw/Chapter2_ComplianceTheories.pdf

* See www.ifaw.org

“The CCD is silent on the subject of sanctions. However, you can still name and shame offenders for non-compliance.”

Professors Stephen Pacala and Robert Socolow are co-directors of Princeton University's Carbon Mitigation Initiative. See www.princeton.edu/pr/news/01/q3/0812-carbon.htm

“Many scientists are ...saying we need to go carbon-negative now”.

After listening to the last presentations, I am wondering about the contribution that biomass can make to carbon reduction, in terms of the Wedges Strategy developed by Pacala and Socolow at Princeton*. Land use changes and reforestation biomass are huge potential assets there that we need to get fully into the Climate Treaty. This is something else that the Convention on Desertification could do.

The climate connection It would be interesting to find out exactly what contribution that reforestation of the biomass and dry lands could make to the necessary removal of 125 gigatons of carbon over the next 50 years. We need this both to counteract linear, slow-moving global warming and also to prepare against the so-called RCCEs, the rapid climate change events – the melting of the ice, the shut-down of the thermohaline heat conveyor.

Many scientists now are moving beyond the strategy that would make us carbon-neutral in 50 years. They are saying we need to go carbon-negative now. Because, at 380 parts per million, we are already probably going to lose the Greenland ice and see a seven meter rise in sea-levels. Al Gore has some great but shocking graphics on this in his movie. Going “carbon-negative” requires more use of biomass, biofuel and then capturing and storing carbon. It can be done at scale, and the Convention on Desertification could help bring this issue to the fore.

For bio-carbon, the World Bank has the leading projects now, including many in Africa. They are funding project preparation and helping to ensure local sharing of benefits. It is very important to design a system for bio-carbon credits where enough of the money from the rising value of these credits is left in the developing countries. I am working with the Green Belt Movement in Kenya on a bio-carbon project the World Bank is supporting.

Rediscovering honesty Wangari Maathai's* Green Belt Movement has empowered tens of thousands of men and women to plant, nurture and protect trees. What is not appreciated fully is that she has also created new social norms within this very powerful NGO movement. People are rediscovering the value of honesty, the value of not being corrupt, of being accountable for their actions. This was destroyed by Kenya's Prime Minister Daniel Arap Moi and his regime and it is now being pieced back together through the Green Belt Movement at a scale that I had not appreciated.

Here are some key recommendations that I would encourage desertification champions to follow. All these things fit together into an integrated package:

- Focus more on the progressive clarifications of the obligations at international and national level. That is very important to move toward accountability and compliance.
- Continue, maybe extend, if you can, the capacity building and make sure it includes the focus on the rule of law. All of us have to be teaching the rule of law and recreating the fundamental social norms for the rule of law. This includes working with parliaments, agencies and NGOs.
- Make the Convention on Desertification the first that actually succeeds in this great goal of coordination as well. The champions of the Convention can start doing this without any further authorisation whatsoever. Build the integrated platform for natural resource conventions, build model law, show countries how it can be done by coordinating and simplifying their lives. It would be a huge success.
- Finally, work on the bio-carbon issue. Connect it with the rule of law, as we rehabilitate degraded lands and as we grow more carbon storage.

* Kenya's Wangari Maathai won the 2005 Nobel Prize for Peace

The way to success: Where should UNCCD go now?



Dr Lynn Wagner

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The Convention on Combating Desertification lacks specific mechanisms to put its goals into practice. A critical UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report on the CCD's performance prompted the creation, in 2005, of the Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) to draft a ten-year implementation plan.

Learning
from other
environmental
agreements

These are challenging times for the Convention, but the Joint Inspection Unit report* and the creation of the IIWG offer a unique opportunity for change. The year 2006 also marks ten years since the treaty came into force, time enough to evaluate whether the initial structure is still working.

I'll start with a look at the UNCCD's policy goals, and then go on to its Committee on Science and Technology, the structure by which scientific advice is brought into the Convention. For comparison, I have chosen three multilateral agreements: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). All three offer examples of policy goals that provide a starting point for thinking about elements that might be included in a strategic plan for the Convention to Combat Desertification.

The CBD in 2002 adopted four strategic goals for achievement by 2010, and the UNFF in 2006 came out with four "shared objectives on forests" and a commitment to progress by 2015. The UN's MDG's are not related to a specific multilateral environment agreement, but are very relevant nonetheless, given the strong ties of development issues to desertification.

Taken together, these three models offer six different types of goals that could be adapted and incorporated into a strategic plan for the Convention on desertification. The first type of goal is to define an overall action objective for the convention, and the second type is to define how the convention is linked to socioeconomics and development. The third type defines how the convention will serve as a leader on the issue it deals with, the fourth is to address the importance of financial resources and capacity for implementation and the fifth is to focus on actions that will be taken at the national level. The sixth type of goal that emerges from these three model agreements is to raise public awareness and emphasize communication.

Underline the link to development In the case of the UNCCD, the first two goals – the overall objective and development objective – might best be combined, given that development plays such an important role in UNCCD implementation. In fact, this is arguably the most important of the six categories: the goal must be to set out the Convention's overall ambition and global contribution. A precedent here would be the biodiversity convention's goal to achieve a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. This goal has focused efforts on setting CBD benchmarks and indicators to permit the measurement of progress. A number of CCD national action plans, regional meetings and the IIWG's own mandate have also called for a similar thing.

Alternatively, one could stop short of setting a target date: the UNFF, for example, simply calls for action to reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management*. The vision statement developed at the second meeting of the IIWG offers an excellent starting point for drafting the convention's overall objective:

*For the full text of the JIU report, see www.unjiu.org/data/reports/2005/en2005_5.pdf

*See www.un.org/esa/forests/documents-unff.html#6

“Multilateral environmental agreements might be an ideal medium for action on the MDGS.”

“To forge a global partnership to support the achievement of the MDGs and reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation in affected Parties.”

Convention as leader on the issue Whereas the overall action objective would really define what the Convention seeks to change on the ground, the policy goal of positioning the Convention as a thought-leader would be about defining what the Convention offers to decision makers and to implementers.

For its part, the Convention on Biodiversity has proclaimed itself the standard setter for the global biodiversity agenda. In the same way, one could elaborate on the IIWG’s discussion of a mission statement at its last meeting, with wording along these lines: “The Convention is the global authority on policies and measures to reverse and prevent desertification and land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought through scientific excellence, standard-setting and advocacy.” Defining this as a policy goal could boost fund-raising, raise public awareness and help galvanize action to implement the Convention.

The CCD should also combine the goals of funding and capacity-building with effective national action programmes (NAPs). Language about the need for more financial resources and better training will remain vague unless you can bring the context and substance of NAPs into the discussion. The development and implementation of NAPs, along with sub-regional programmes (SRAPs) and regional action programmes (RAPs), is a critical component of the UNCCD regime.

Why NAPs fail, and how to fix them In practice, however, NAPs frequently do not work, due to a lack of money, appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how. The NAP process has been criticised for failing to do several things, all of them related: involving key decision makers outside environment ministries, integrating desertification programmes into other development strategies and government policies in affected countries, and highlighting and justifying funding priorities. As a result of these failures, ministries outside the environment ministry (usually the finance ministry) fail to cite desertification as a priority in discussions with donor agencies. NAPs may appear more as “shopping lists” to donors rather than prioritised action proposals, leaving donors less likely to fund desertification projects within the UNCCD framework.

Here are some options to consider for a more successful approach. One is to invite affected country Parties to integrate and prioritize their National Action Programmes (NAPs) into their national development plans. Another is to invite developed country Parties, for their part, to mainstream UNCCD objectives into their development programmes and projects. NAPs should also define the responsibilities of various actors in desertification control and describe the gains that they bring to other programmes within environment ministries and development plans, such as poverty reduction strategy papers.

Another policy goal included in the strategic plans of the three model agreements relates to public awareness and communication. As luck would have it, the IIWG drafting process is coming right on the heels of the 2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD) and all the work that has gone into promoting public awareness for it. So this would be a good time to draw lessons from the communication campaign for IYDD and develop a long-term, ongoing strategy of education and public awareness, to bring all stakeholders, including the private sector, into the process.

From ad-hoc themes to a ten-year agenda Finally, the process of mapping out the UNCCD’s policy goals should also include setting out thematic issues to be addressed during the coming ten-year period, to avoid the missed opportunities and often hurried, year-to-year nature of the present system of agenda-setting within

“As things stand now, the Conference of the Parties and its Committee on Science and Technology do not appear coordinated.”

the Convention. As things stand now, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention and its Committee on Science and Technology (CST) do not appear coordinated. The CST’s work should be scheduled several years in advance and feed into COP discussions in such a way that gives all stakeholders, including the Parties, time to prepare for the consideration and follow-up of chosen thematic issues.

The themes for a ten-year CCD agenda could include those that have already been identified in various declarations and decisions, including sustainable agricultural and ranching production systems, new and renewable energy sources, reforestation, soil conservation, and desertification monitoring and assessment. Additional issues could be the links between environmental degradation, marginalisation and migration, and the impact that the liberalisation of trade in agriculture has on desertification.

This planning process should take into consideration the fact that the UN Commission on Sustainable Development will also deal with desertification, rural development, land degradation and drought in 2008-2009, offering opportunities for synergy.

So now, how to translate the agreed policy goals into action? Two ideas in this regard come from the Ramsar Convention*, whose 2002 strategic plan physically links policy goals to the actual text of the convention.

Two-year pilot projects? The Ramsar Convention lists its five General Objectives alongside the specific Article that each one relates to, thus emphasizing the close connection between objectives and the convention itself. The UNCCD could go a step further, hyperlinking its goals to the decisions and declarations of the COP as well as to the Convention text, thus illustrating the intricate ties between decisions and established policy goals and making it easier for the Parties to identify and address any gaps.

A second idea to borrow from Ramsar’s strategic plan is its method of implementation, which specifies the action to be taken to achieve the goals. The UNCCD’s own ten-year strategic plan could move swiftly from the abstract to the concrete by assigning, for example, two-year pilot projects to Parties, who would act either as project hosts or as providers of support and resources. The pilot projects could seek to demonstrate, for example, the linkages and synergies between combating desertification and the Millennium Development Goals, the potential of support from the private sector and NGOs, or the link to migration. The Convention’s Committee for Review and Implementation (CRIC) could then review reports on these pilot projects and seek to draw lessons from them.

The United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) also suggests a number of changes for the UNCCD’s Committee on Science and Technology. The UNCCD is in good company here. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) are also currently evaluating options for improving the effectiveness of their scientific bodies. My comments draw on the experience of these conventions’ scientific bodies, as well as those of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Migratory Species and Ramsar.

Scientific advice should be “bottom-up” Robert Watson’s* ideal of what scientific advice should be to a convention offers a good starting point for thinking about the sort of scientific advice that should be considered in this context. He says it should “provide independent scientific advice, on a regular basis to governments, be intergovernmental, involve all major stakeholders and be representative of opinions, disciplines, and geographical regions”.

Another criterion should be to match the production of scientific advice to the UNCCD’s decentralised, local approach to desertification. The Convention’s annexes

*Official name is The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat. It was adopted by governments at a meeting in Ramsar Iran, and came into force in 1975. See www.ramsar.org

*Robert Watson, Chief Scientist, World Bank. See www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/other_documents/vko28/en_GB/1152947059605/

“An MEA’s scientific body can turn useful materials without having to produce major scientific assessments.”

permit each region to determine its particular activities, and assume that these will depend on local conditions and the local situation.

Marybeth Long Martello of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University has cautioned about adopting a “centralised approach to knowledge and knowledge production”. She points out that the Convention’s Committee on Science and Technology seems to treat knowledge as a “standardisable” commodity and take a centralised, top-down approach to its production, despite, as she writes, the “general agreement that much of what makes traditional knowledge valuable is its connection to particular environments, identities, beliefs and values.” One should think carefully about what can be expected of a top-down intergovernmental scientific body and also pursue efforts to bring in “bottom-up” ways of producing and using knowledge.

More ideas for the CST My final points concern the composition of the CST, the timing of its meetings and the nature of its published output. As for composition, the JIU recommended that “all country Parties designate officials with relevant expertise as their representatives on the CST.” There is an inherent trade-off between establishing a large panel to which all Parties can appoint a member, which is what the UNCCD has done, and choosing to convene a smaller, appointed group of recognised experts. The large panel model can be more successful at achieving the “buy-in” of parties during the scientific examination stage of policy formulation, but they often are seen as having a political, rather than scientific, approach to the issues. The smaller, appointed group model more often enjoys recognition as a body of scientific experts and might be able to accomplish more than an unwieldy, large group. The UNCCD’s Group of Experts, which was created to address some efficiency issues within the CST, has attempted to bring the benefits of the smaller group model to the CST, although its performance has been less than optimal.

As for timing, the CST currently meets at the beginning of the sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP). I think the initial idea was both to save money and to encourage discussion between the scientists and the COP delegates. But it is a bad point in the cycle for delegates to be trying to incorporate scientific advice into their negotiating positions, because they usually already have their instructions from back home.

The model used by the Framework Convention on Climate Change might be more useful, where their Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) meets in conjunction with its Subsidiary Body on Implementation. In the UNCCD case, this meeting might best be held in between COP meetings, in conjunction with the current meeting cycle of Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC).

Consult with the NAPs Coordination between these two subsidiary bodies, the CST and CRIC, could permit the CST scientists to discuss implementation with a variety of people working on the National Action Programmes, so the CST could learn of events on the ground and what types of questions it should be preparing answers for.

The CST as currently established does not produce its own assessments, or publish reports. Though it would be most attractive to have a body of renowned and respected scientists coming out with findings that can galvanize public opinion, in the way that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) does, we have already seen that top-down assessments might be of dubious value for the UNCCD. But the Ramsar Convention’s Scientific and Technical Review Panel has developed a useful “Technical Report Series” and a set of “Wise Use Handbooks”. These show that an MEA’s scientific body can turn out useful materials for its stakeholders without having to produce major scientific assessments.



Session 3

Repositioning the Convention

Of all multilateral environmental agreements, the UNCCD is uniquely comprehensive in its scope. It seeks not only to resolve global environmental problems but also to ease global poverty. But despite – or perhaps because of – its broad commitment to development, the Convention is beset by ill-defined policy objectives and uncertainty over its implementation. National-level debate about how to enact it has been conducted generally in isolation from the Monterrey, Doha, Paris and Kyoto negotiating processes that have set new parameters for all sectors of international cooperation. This might explain the acute problems – especially the under-funding and lack of political enforceability – that the Convention faces. Repositioning the Convention means bringing it to bear actively on the other international negotiations currently underway. This, too, is a governance challenge.

Globalisation and trade: Opportunity or threat for sustainable land management?



Owen Cylke

Senior Programme Manager, Macroeconomics Programme Office for Sustainable Development, WWF

The benefits of globalised trade are flowing mainly to the strongest national economies, while largely bypassing the least-developed countries (LDCs), including those hardest hit by desertification. What is the impact of trade and globalisation on sustainable land management and the lives of ordinary people in the LDCs?

“Avoid the ‘macro’ approach and focus on people.”

My work at the WWF is focused almost entirely on the effects of global trade at the local level. The Macroeconomics Programme Office for Sustainable Development at WWF is concerned with vulnerable people and vulnerable places. We seek to understand and deal with the complex relationships between trade, rural poverty and environmental change. Our mission is to help protect, restore and enhance the natural environment and the well-being of people who depend on it.

“The bloom is off the rose as far as trade’s contribution to global wealth is concerned.”

I first came across the phenomenon of desertification before it was even called that. I began my career in 1970 as deputy director of a small USAID office for Central and West African Affairs. Then the Sahel drought emergency came and suddenly my office grew into the largest programme at USAID.

Then in 1980, as deputy director of the USAID programme in Egypt, I began to think carefully about climate. Egypt is a desert country, with water at the centre of people’s thinking. Even back then, for many people drought wasn’t God’s will so much as an event that seemed to come from somewhere else, possibly a change of climate caused by countries in the North. Already, there was talk of responsibilities, even reparations. In 1990, I was the assistant administrator in AID for food and voluntary assistance. Africa was again at the centre of concern, and it was the first time that I came across the word “desertification”. The numbers back then were already impossible to ignore: 1.2 billion people in the world considered poor, 900 million of those in rural areas, of whom 600 million suffering hunger and maybe 300 million caught up in desertification.

Aggregate numbers are not enough Finally, five years ago, I became engaged with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, to which WWF contributed five studies and grew to understand better the connections and interdependence of humans and ecosystems. This 35-year perspective on development tells me that it is absolutely vital to move out of the abstract, to get away from the “macro” view. Almost all the information that comes out of the international financial community is expressed in aggregate figures, but aggregates are not going to tell you much about families living out in the Sahel.

Despite all our knowledge today of drought, climate, desertification and vulnerability, I am amazed by the development community’s continuing fixation on the primacy of faster economic growth. I was in Mali recently, and the entire policy establishment, whether people from the World Bank, the European Union or western-educated government officials, was focused on agriculture for export, paying almost no attention to local, national or regional markets. It was all about irrigated, large-scale, commercial agriculture for export, not dry-land agriculture and smallholder farming. It was about capital and technology, not people-centered agriculture.

Policy failures The obsession with aggregates and accelerating economic growth is drowning out everything else. I am not against growth and development or against people earning more income. But in this process, the concerns of 90% of humanity are being left off the table. I would argue that this is a policy failure.

Policies on globalisation and trade are failing, as well. I think we are going to find that there is not as much of a beneficial impact on development as we hoped. When I attended the 2003 WTO Ministerial conference in Cancún, people were saying that world trade was going to contribute something in the nature of \$500 billion to global income and lift 150 million people out of poverty. The World Bank went even further, saying the end-product would be \$850 billion, and that developing countries would collect about \$550 million of that.

But two year later, at the 2005 WTO Ministerial conference in Hong-Kong, the World Bank had lowered its estimate from \$850 billion to \$300 billion – and that only in the case of full trade liberalisation, which we are not going to get. With partial liberalisation, the Bank predicted some \$100 billion in global gains and income, with around \$16 billion for developing countries. The estimate for the number of people to be lifted out of poverty was also cut in half. So, in those few years, I would argue, the bloom went off the rose as far as trade’s across-the board contribution to global wealth was concerned.

*See http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/what_we_do/policy/macro_economics/our_solutions/trade/tpe/index.cfm

“There’s no development without accumulated capital... Liberalised trade policies may actually be de-capitalising many rural areas.”

Insights from WWF experience We have a major project underway with seven implementation sites in Chile, China, India, Madagascar, Mexico, South Africa and Vietnam. It is funded by the European Union and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and called “Trade, Rural Poverty and the Environment”. The purpose is to provide solid empirical analysis of the impacts of trade liberalisation on land and water resources and the rural poor and to identify policies that can make trade contribute more effectively to sustainable development.

Among the insights we are gaining is that, in the cascade of overlapping policy, climate, environmental and socio-economic issues, it is very hard to isolate trade as an individual cause for any one thing. This suggests the solutions to poverty very probably will be found somewhere other than in world trade. And we are seeing evidence that, while the benefits of trade do reach some of the poor, they almost never reach the very poor. Both findings emphasize the importance of being people-centered, of keeping your eye on the scale, the structure and the products of the farming enterprise itself: how the farming is organised, who is benefiting, who is investing, who is working, who is not and where the returns are going.

Secondly, it is becoming pretty clear that one of the major drivers of land change in the world is the introduction and rise of wide-scale, industrial monoculture farming. This intensification of agricultural production is having a major impact on small-scale farmers. We talk a lot about the comparative advantage of lower labor costs and cheap land. But being competitive in the international marketplace is all about efficiency, and efficiency is all about technology, and technology is all about capital. Most of these poor countries do not have either technology or capital, while the economic activity associated with trade worsens pressures on the natural environment. As a result, we see large international agribusiness moving in.

Local communities miss tax income Third, the focus on household income as the main measure of poverty is obscuring the huge importance of community assets and income. Foreign investment may be increasing in some countries, but if governments waive taxes on foreign investors, local communities will derive no revenues from them. In addition, profits are repatriated out and the value chains remain up to 100%-owned by foreign investors. I would argue that there is no development without accumulated capital and that liberalised trade policies may actually be de-capitalising many rural areas.

We do not see many “win-win” situations. Most are “win-lose” or even “lose-lose”. There are no local governance structures for resolving the trade-offs needed between various outcomes. At local level, there is very little participation, no way to really come to grips with mediating these trade offs, no decision tools. In the absence of local structures, it is this highly aggregated international regime that has really set the rules of the road. Poor people are simply marginalised.

It is all very well to talk about technical interventions but the real issue is, can we get governance structures out there that give the poor and those concerned about the environment a real voice in the governance process?

Some intervention strategies Much of what we have heard so far today has been about horizontal connections to other MEAs. Here are some vertical intervention strategies. Consider, for example, the international trade regime’s regard for what’s called “special and differential treatment”. Despite the focus on aggregates and the global scale, despite the pressure to move to full liberalisation, there is room in the trade regime to deal with special products, special people and special kinds of places. This should be further exploited.

“Land-use changes
are the foundation
of the carbon
chain.”

The second thing to keep in mind is the impact that multilateral environmental agreements can have on the international trade regime. The WTO process is open to influence and constructive pressure.

Third, we must concentrate increasingly on the development process at national level. The poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) and the European Union's new environmental partnership agreements (EPAs) are really incredibly important and very often focus too heavily on accelerated economic growth. There is real work to be done here. You can worry about desertification and about the CCD's national action programmes all you want, but if you do not get these issues inside the EPAs and PRSPs, I fear the battle is lost.

Local governance is the key Real work also needs to be done around small-holder agriculture. Opportunities exist within commercial agriculture, within NGOs and through voluntary compliance. The two that we emphasize the most at WWF is local governance, and getting poor people and the concerns of vulnerable areas really engaged in the decision process. There are many layers to this policy game: local, intermediate, national and international. Working that full gamut of levels can not just be done at the international or national levels. Those governance systems have to be in place at the local level if anything is going to happen at all.

We also think there is an enormous opportunity for agro-forestry in carbon finance. There is much talk about carbon sequestration and forestry alone, but degraded lands also offer enormous potential for agro-forestry. We must bring the parties interested in biodiversity, climate change, sustainable land management and poverty reduction together with those in carbon finance.

WWF's Macroeconomics Programme Office for Sustainable Development (MPO) has created a programmatic approach, "From Negotiations to Adjustment"* that proposes a shift in the trade debate toward national and local levels. We want to anticipate and address the specific effects of trade, investment, and related transformations in global agriculture on the rural areas in which most of the world's poor live, and on the ecosystems on which they depend. We are trying to identify what's needed at the national and local levels to ensure that trade results in more sustainable and equitable development. And we are finding out how the stakeholders – governments, producer groups, the private sector, donor agencies, academia, and NGOs – can help establish these conditions.

If you are a development worker out in the field, you will have many questions about how to tackle specific problems. When you go on the Web, you will find there is no easy access to anything that tells you how to begin to structure an answer. The "From Negotiations to Adjustment" approach focuses on providing analysis, building capacity, and developing platforms and processes – a sort of clearing-house for interventions – to help these stakeholders begin to answer these questions themselves.

Work on the carbon side We are developing programmes focused on five different areas of real importance to carbon capture and sequestration: agroforestry, sustainable land management, tree-product marketing, community engagement and sustainable finance. Measurement and monitoring is vitally important here. And the most important thing is keeping desertification on the international agenda, because land-use changes are the foundation of the carbon chain. The WWF really wants to see it grow in importance.

*See WWF publication at
<http://assets.panda.org/downloads/adjustmentwebfinal.pdf>

The new development architecture



Ingrid-Gabriela Hoven

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The revised architecture of development policy offers new opportunities for sustainable land use and the UNCCD. Donors and aid recipients should abandon the mindset of the last ten years and take a fresh look at ways to adjust the Convention to the new fundamentals of development cooperation.

“Concentrate on the essentials.”

Seen from the perspective of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, there are two important new features in the development landscape: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations, to which Germany committed itself in 2000, and the Paris Declaration of March, 2005, in which the international community as a whole pledged to improve the quality and effectiveness of development cooperation.

You will remember that the 2005 Paris Declaration* followed the 2002 development summit in Monterrey, where donor nations agreed to increase the value of their overseas development assistance to 0.7% of their respective gross national product. The Paris Declaration is therefore about ensuring that these additional financial resources are used effectively and efficiently.

The CCD appears to match these new goals rather well. For example, MDG 1 (see box) sets a clear target to halve the number of people living on less than \$1 a day by the year 2015. It is obvious that the Convention can directly contribute both to the

reduction of extreme poverty and to the reduction of hunger. MDG 7, too, is directly relevant, as it concerns environmental sustainability.

The Millennium Development Goals

- 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2: Achieve universal primary education
- 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4: Reduce child mortality
- 5: Improve maternal health
- 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- 8: Develop a global partnership for development

The eight MDGs are to be achieved by 2015. They are drawn from the Millennium Declaration adopted by 189 nations at the UN Millennium Summit on September 8, 2000.

Putting partners in the driver's seat Until recently, bilateral donors, the World Bank and regional development banks all had shelves stacked high with handbooks on how to plan, implement and monitor development projects. This placed an immense procedural burden on partner countries. The Paris Declaration marked a departure from this practice: it commits donors both to harmonise their separate aid activities with each other and to align them closely with the development programmes of partner countries.

This is the second key principle of the Paris Declaration, to which Germany is very much committed. The new role of donors is to foster the responsibility of the recipient countries for their own development. That implies that we have to tailor our aid to the structures and policies that the partner countries themselves claim ownership and responsibility for. Our partner countries have to be firmly in the driver's seat.

In addition, we want to make development more effective by improving the outputs. Many institutions have taken this results-oriented approach on board, but we are still too fixated on inputs. For example, capacity-building programmes too often

*See <http://www.aidharmonisation.org/>

are still measured by how much money has been put into them, rather than how much useful training has come out of them. And we donors still have a tendency of planting our own flags on projects, rather than lining up squarely behind our partners and their programmes.

An old habit of “flag-planting” The Paris Declaration is forcing us to abandon our old but much-loved habit of creating patchworks of individual projects and to move on to broader, cross-sector approaches, building coherent programme clusters, working within coordinated groups of donors and contributing jointly to partner-country budgets. And another major new element is mutual accountability. We are always talking about the need for better governance in partner countries, but we donors must also assume more responsibility on our side for the way we manage development and for what it actually achieves. This needs independent, systematic monitoring and evaluation, which is now getting underway in some countries.

In some ways, the MDGs* and the new standards of good donor behaviour spelled out in the Paris Declaration are already taken up in the CCD. The Convention sets clear environmental goals by promoting sustainable land-use systems in dryland areas, but it positions itself clearly within the framework of sustainable development. Indeed, I would even call the CCD a precursor of the new aid architecture, given its insistence on the importance of policy coherence, decentralisation and the importance of bringing civil society into the decision-making process. All these are state-of-the-art factors of modern development policy and fully compatible with the MDGs.

But if the MDGs and the Paris Declaration have already taken these issues mainstream, what specific benefits does the CCD still offer? What do we gain if the CCD only enumerates the key principles and variables of sustainable land-use management without providing guidance and regulations on implementation? What is the Convention’s value if it lacks clear recommendations for action and quantifiable goals? Should we conclude that, having set out a binding framework for development cooperation, the CCD has already served its purpose? Do we still need it?

Work towards the greening of the PRSPs Let us take a closer look at the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, or PRSPs. According to the Paris Declaration, PRSPs should be the fulcrum of all our action: partner-countries formulate their development strategy and we donors support them and are part of the process. Logically enough, one would expect internationally-agreed environmental measures to be an integral part of them. But the reality is that, though they may pay lip service to environmental problems, many PRSPs too often provide no operational basis for solutions. Consequently, national budget allocations in developing countries frequently ignore the environment.

Is the CCD not just the vehicle that is needed to mainstream environmental and land-use issues into the PRSPs, to strengthen our partners’ sense of ownership and to sensitise policymakers and public opinion on the issues?

If we all agree that land-use management is a global challenge and that the MDGs can only be achieved through interventions to protect the environment, then why is the CCD still languishing? First, let us realize that the challenges posed by global environmental problems can only be tackled if all relevant actors and institutions comply with “good governance” criteria: clarity of definition, participatory and coherent action, transparency and good management. We need to make sure the Convention matches these criteria.

Keep it simple I believe that the IIWG should come up with a fresh assessment of how best to put the Convention to use. The IIWG should take a hard look at the

*See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2006/MDGReport2006.pdf>

“Isn’t the CCD just the vehicle to mainstream environmental and land-use issues into the PRSPs?”

*See <http://www.unep.org/Ozone/pdfs/viennaconvention2002.pdf>

“The most successful environmental agreements have been the most tightly-focused ones.”

*See, for example, www.worldwatercouncil.org

Convention’s proposed National Action Programmes and at the role of its institutions (like the Secretariat, the Global Mechanism or the Committee for Science and Technology). And, given the new development architecture, it should also review the purpose and function of the national and regional coordination groups and focal points that the Convention calls for.

My second recommendation is to concentrate on essentials. The CCD should restrict its activities to the most important technical and political priorities. Despite the complex causes of unsustainable land-use, we have got to home in on a core cluster of tasks and resist the temptation to keep adding new activities to the list. We have tended in the past to wander off-course with the CCD and may have projected a sense of aimlessness and drift to the outside, as well. Our motto should be, “Keep it simple!”. Past experience shows us that the most successful environmental agreements have been the most tightly-focused ones, like the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer*.

Thirdly, we should realize that form follows function. For years we have been trying to obtain for the UNCCD the same level of recognition that the other Rio conventions enjoy. Quite honestly, I think we have been pursuing this goal without even asking if it is a relevant one. It is the aim of the Convention, rather than our concerns about its positioning, that should determine our actions.

Look outside the Convention What counts is that the CCD aims to prevent the destruction of natural capital that is a key to species survival on earth. So let us focus on function first, on the steps needed to promote our concerns. And if we find that some of these processes are best undertaken outside the Convention’s existing framework, we should not worry too much. Look around and you will soon see that formal treaties and conventions are not the only way to address major global challenges. For instance, the world has a very active water community* that raises awareness, develops action plans and gets things done without having to rely on a binding legal framework.

A fourth aspect is the need for clear targets and for standardised monitoring and evaluation procedures. I support the calls for stronger scientific inputs into the CCD. Some have suggested setting up a high-profile independent panel on desertification, much like the present Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, whose reports are eagerly awaited by governments, NGOs and the broader public. Perhaps more important is first to consider what sort of scientific input is needed. As Richard Klein has said (see page 17), for too long we have neglected adaptation to climate change. Along with mitigation, I believe that we should invest more in adaptation to create a broader scientific foundation for this field.

Fifth, the UNCCD should explore how to integrate its goals and recommendations on sustainable land use into major development strategies, not only into local processes like the PRSPs but also into specific technical areas like agricultural productivity and knowledge development. As some of you know, agriculture and development will be the theme of the 2008 World Development Report. One of our jobs must be to make sure the report takes full account of the CCD and its concerns.

Two indicators of progress We have often debated whether we should strengthen the environmental profile of the CCD, or preserve its character as a development convention. Increasingly, I am coming to realize that the Convention is both things, and that, anyway, these distinctions are not really helpful anymore. More important is to identify elements within the CCD that we can substantiate with figures and on which we can monitor progress. I suggest at least two indicators.

The first should be to demonstrate in concrete terms the impact of our joint

“We have got to seize every opportunity to promote this matter. Never mind who gets the credit.”

efforts in land conservation. The MDGs themselves are not an instrument for resource allocation, but rather a rod with which to measure how far we have come in development cooperation and poverty reduction. So the IIWG could also help fine-tune the CCD into just such a complementary role, by presenting it as a resource-allocation framework offering measurable quality norms and standards, monitoring and evaluation tools and triggers for international and national action.

The second indicator is successful public relations. We have made some progress in creating wider awareness of sustainable land use and generating more ownership among ourselves and in our partner countries, but the very nature of soil conservation makes it hard to present as an appealing and popular topic. There is far more news value in announcements like “We have just built a highway”, or “I have opened a new hospital” than saying you have kept this forest intact or preserved the soil in that stretch of land.

Nevertheless, we have got to seize every opportunity to promote this matter. Never mind who gets the credit, be it the CCD, a national PRSP, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biodiversity, the Food and Agriculture Organization or whatever else. At the end of the day, the people who are affected will not care who paid for or carried out the intervention. If we are not successful, all they will do is blame us that we did not help them when we had the chance to do so.



Session 4

Reviewing the options

For many in the South, the Convention is little-known and less understood, one of an already bewildering proliferation of MEAs and other international development projects. While some, like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, are nourished with money from external sources, others, like the CCD, must compete for funds from the national government's own budget. Two officials from the front lines of CCD implementation describe the difficulties of connecting the Convention's global prescriptions to national initiatives, and the need to convince their developing-country contacts of the merits of the new aid architecture.



Summary remarks, Grégoire de Kalbermatten

Deputy Executive Secretary, UNCCD Secretariat, Bonn

This Convention should not become marginalised. If it were to fail, it would mean, among other things, a waste of taxpayers' money. Multilateral cooperation in the environmental field would suffer. Developed countries would have thrown away over \$100 million dollars without the tangible results we all seek, and the currency of all MEAs and also of international law would be devalued. If this instrument is not implemented, then your partners in the South might well say, "Look, if there is no implementation of the UNCCD, why should we try to implement other frameworks?"

But there are solid grounds for eventual success. All the elements are there. Now it is mostly a matter of piecing the puzzle together. The next two or three years will be crucial.

Ms Hoven has said, "Keep it simple". But how to achieve simplicity in the UNCCD, which embraces so many different fields?

I sympathize with those who say we should focus on soil and synergies. In a word, if we go back to the basics, it is all about the soil. If the UNCCD can make us all focus on the soil, it can become a platform for synergistic development with other conventions, spanning issues like sustainable land and water management, vegetation cover, the whole question of adaptation and also biodiversity protection. Focusing on

"There are solid grounds for eventual success. All the elements are there."

the soil will also permit emphasis on carbon, and thus a promising means of exploring the issue of payment for ecosystem services.

Start with working models Many would also like to see a group of developed-country Parties agree on a structured response to the UNCCD and provide affirmative support to 15 to 20 countries, on a bilateral rather than multilateral basis. This could provide working models for other countries to follow. We won't manage right away to make this Convention a success in all 191 Parties. But in some selected countries, country-level coordination can bring this whole issue forward.

The problem is that each of the different environmental conventions are rather territorial and act in parallel, rather than in unison. Each of their COPs have their own agenda. Five different parallel processes create complexities, because then, instead of achieving synergy, we may end up getting entropy.

We need to take a very pragmatic look at where we can achieve synergies. Land degradation threatens the global environment and people's livelihoods and is a theme common to all the major international conventions and agreements on environmental and sustainable development issues. The GEF Sustainable Land Management Task Force*, with its central notion of integrated land and water management, might be a good way of bringing together the focal points of all the conventions. That sort of thing is really not happening enough. We need to produce some measurable successes in a limited number of countries, and then take these back to the COP and say "Look, here is a working, synergistic process!"

"We need to produce some measurable successes in a limited number of countries."

"Awfully big task" Your partners in the South see this as their Convention. Developing countries have a sense of ownership for it. We must realize that, by ratifying this Convention, they have voluntarily committed themselves to implement measures that, before, arguably, could have been imposed on them by donors as conditional for funding. Read the Convention and you'll see that they have taken on an awfully big task. Implementing democratic governance of natural resources is a huge challenge. We didn't even do this in our own industrialised countries until relatively recently. Some developing countries are making a real effort here and deserve to have their developed-country partners meet them halfway.

I also agree that we need more science. The IIWG's strategic review should lead to a better Committee on Science and Technology. We need a strongly networked mechanism, delivering state-of-the-art science on environmental scarcity, land and water degradation and creating a global consensus on the need for action.

I was once a diplomat, so I know the thinking on our side of the Mediterranean. But my current job has exposed me to the sensitivities of the South, as well. I have to say that, unless we pay attention, many there could turn suspicious about the North's new policy orientations.

No "secret agenda" While there are no fundamental issues dividing North and South, there is a lot of misunderstanding. The North has to convince partners from the South that there is no nasty, secret agenda behind the talk about governance. We must communicate better, ideally away from the formal negotiating table, at which people's positions often tend to be frozen. When we talk about synergies, they should not think it is a dubious word, a trick from the developed countries to give less money. When we speak about basket funding or the Paris Declaration, they should not see it as a way to trap them in a zero-sum game, where they are forced to choose between either desertification or education, the sewage system or healthcare. If we could create a forum like this one, but with developing-country participation, where these sensitivities can be addressed and clarified, we would be in good shape to start a new phase of the Convention's life.

*See www.gefweb.org/projects/Focal_Areas/land/documents/Network_of_Global_Partners.pdf



“Avoidance”
plus “adaptation”
make for two
very strong
locomotives
that can pull
the notions of
land and soil
to the fore.

Dr Christian Mersmann

Managing Director, Global Mechanism of the UNCCD

Some say the CCD has mutated from a call for action into a cry for help. This, at least, is how certain constituencies in partner countries see the Convention. They have a hard time understanding why development instruments like this one are not always equipped with their own, supplementary financial resources. There is less and less money to be raised at international level, except for hot-button issues like natural catastrophe or HIV/AIDS. So we have got to realise that it is not only the architecture of aid that has changed. The financial architecture has changed, as well. The reality is that, increasingly, donor money is going into direct budget support in partner-countries rather than into donor-designed projects. The consequence is that the funds that we need have to be raised from national budgets.

Our focal points in these countries often tell us they have no access to their Ministry of Finance. They say, “We can not do it; there is no way we can get in there.” All too often, these focal points, our counterparts, are not insiders, they are not part of the new aid and finance architecture.

Fit in with the prevailing political context The money is there, it just needs to be mobilised. We are in direct competition with other sectors and other national priorities, and it is up to us to get the CCD onto the political agenda. It is the job of the Global Mechanism to help our partners understand that it is no good just trying to implement the CCD on its own terms, i.e. fighting desertification. Instead, we have to show awareness of the prevailing political context, be it education, health or trade, and tell our story in the terms of that context. This is the way to get our focal points directly involved in their respective national processes of budget and resource allocation.

But how can we ensure the CCD is taken seriously at the national budget level to start with? It boils down to the status of a given country’s national ratification process and to compliance. It is about the actual political significance, if any, of land degradation in the eyes of the government. And as we, for our part, strive to turn the CCD into a comprehensive development framework and pursue a “greening” of the national PRSPs, it is regrettable to see that, elsewhere, individual sectors are being singled out for priority attention. A balanced approach to development is difficult under these circumstances.

Another key task of the Global Mechanism is to convince the World Bank, the African regional development banks and other donor organisations to invest in NAPs. Admittedly, we have to improve on the quality of currently existing NAPs. But we also need a clearer definition of the CCD’s actual objectives, not only for all its 191 signatory nations but also, in greater detail, for each of the Convention’s regional annexes. Only in this way can we assess the CCD’s value and then properly position it in a given national context. Take the example of Ghana: the north of the country is dry, but not the south. What role can the CCD play in Ghana? What would CCD implementation mean for rural development there? There is a national debate raging on this as I speak.

Clearly, we have got to give much more weight to governance, be it institution-building, organisational change or effective national-level cooperation, whether between individual ministries or between government and civil society. And it is true that we are not getting much help here from research. There isn’t enough science on governance or on institutional development and reorganisation.

“Avoidance” worth exploring Since “avoided deforestation” is considered a post-Kyoto success factor, why not develop a similar rationale for “avoided land degradation”? “Avoidance” plus “adaptation to climate change” make for two very strong locomotives that can pull the notions of land and soil to the fore. Why not take up “avoidance” as a leading theme? It would certainly be one way of convincing the World Bank’s country directors and even the most hardboiled macroeconomists that CCD-related programmes are really a worthwhile investment.

Final remarks

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I agree that there is an almost inherent tendency towards complexity, a proliferation of workshops and capacity-building processes in developing countries, all of them conducted separately, oriented vertically rather than horizontally, as they should be. So when we developed countries start saying, “Can we not tie things together more, couldn’t we, for example, make the UNDP the umbrella organisation for meetings for all MEA focal points, from the UNFF to the UNFCCC?”, we are met with a certain mistrust. There are no magic-bullet remedies for this, unfortunately.

On the subject of needed incentives, I agree that the carbon market offers great potential. Our quest is to attribute so much value to environmental services as to create real incentives for, say, not cutting down a forest or degrading a given stretch of land. Precisely how to achieve this remains to be seen, but one of the CCD’s tasks in the next five years might be to work on a package of measures to present to the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and say, “We’d like you to take the following into consideration for your new commitments after Kyoto, post 2012.” There is still time to do this.

Good governance is needed in many different areas, and if the CCD actively takes up and carries forward good-governance issues, then the BMZ will continue to support it at both international and local levels. Let us be careful to avoid overlaps and duplication. Let us also look hard for ways to combine CCD action with existing mechanisms. For example, I think the New Africa Partnership for Development (NEPAD)* system of mutual peer review is an excellent initiative. African countries are analysing and evaluating each other’s performance against certain criteria. Governance is absolutely central to this peer-review process. This NEPAD framework is a natural forum for many aspects that are firmly anchored in the CCD, such as the importance of decentralised decisionmaking and the participation of civil society.

We have discussed some complicated issues and developed useful ideas. This conference is thus a further stone added to the mosaic. Things will not end here. Let’s keep it up. I think that a useful next step, as Grégoire de Kalbermatten has suggested, could be to hold a similar meeting with our developing country partners. And we would be happy to stay in touch with you all, as well. With the IIWG, the CCD has entered a new phase. Your contributions today will help us pursue that work energetically.

* See <http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/home.php>

Glossary

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| BMZ | Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) |
| Carbon finance and trading | A trading system to help countries meet their greenhouse gas (GHG) emission goals, as allowed by the Kyoto treaty (see below). The idea behind carbon trading is to reward countries that meet their requirements and also to provide financial incentives to others to make the effort. This in turn has led to a rapidly expanding global market that includes carbon exchanges, traders, funds, bankers, brokers, accountants, lawyers and analysts. Some of this activity is driven by projects under the Kyoto treaty's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), an arrangement allowing industrialised countries that are committed to reducing their GHGs to invest in emission-reducing projects in developing countries as an alternative to the frequently more costly efforts to reduce emissions at home. For more on the CDM, see http://cdm.unfccc.int/index.html and also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clean_Development_Mechanism . For carbon finance applications to dryland areas, see 'Carbon sequestration' below. |
| Carbon fund | An investment vehicle that seeks either to repay investors in carbon credits, or to use income from selling such credits to generate or enhance investment returns. Such funds can either simply buy credits, or invest in the underlying projects and claim title over emission reductions they generate. |
| Carbon sequestration | Carbon and CO ₂ are stored naturally in forests, soil, and oceans, and can be removed from the atmosphere by land use change, afforestation, reforestation, ocean fertilisation, and changes in agricultural practices. For details on this and carbon funding in general, see the 2004 FAO publication "Carbon sequestration in dryland soils" at www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5738e/y5738e00.htm |
| Carbon sinks | Systems that absorb CO ₂ from the atmosphere and store it. Trees, plants, and the oceans are examples, but sinks can also be man-made. |
| CoP | Conference of the Parties The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification meets every two years. It is the Convention's highest decision-making body. The first session of the COP to the UNCCD took place in Rome, Italy, from September 29 to October 10, 1997 |
| CRIC | Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the UNCCD |
| CST | Committee on Science and Technology |
| DC | Development cooperation |
| Decentralisation | Transfer of centralised structures in industry, politics, settlements and budgetary responsibilities. Decentralisation is, for instance, the transfer of political decision-making authority and institutions from central governments to intermediate or lower administrative levels. |
| DED | Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (German Development Service) |
| Degradation | Loss of the typical characteristics of specific landscape components (vegetation, soil, etc.) by changed environmental conditions, over-exploitation etc. |
| Drylands | Areas exposed to an arid, semi-arid or dry-subhumid climate and therefore at risk of desertification. These climatic conditions are defined easily by a simple coefficient reflecting the ratio of potential evaporation to precipitation (0.05 – 0.65). |
| Erosion | Detachment, removal and transport of rock material and soil by water, wind or gravity. |
| EU | European Union |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| Focal Points | Person or institution representing each UNCCD party as contact point for the UNCCD Secretariat and other partners for all UNCCD issues. In general, Focal Points also manage the national coordination bureau which promotes the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of National Action Programmes. |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |

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| GEF | Global Environment Facility: the most important funding instrument for international environment conventions. The GEF was established by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 1990. It operates as the financial mechanism of the Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Biodiversity (UNCBD) Conventions. Anti-desertification projects relevant to climate change, biodiversity, ozone depletion, and international waters may be eligible for funding. |
| GM | Global Mechanism of the UNCCD. One of the statutory bodies of the UNCCD, the Global Mechanism promotes the mobilisation and channelling of substantial financial resources, including the transfer of technology, on a grant basis, and/or on concessional or other terms, to affected developing country Parties to combat land degradation and poverty. The GM is hosted in Rome by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and functions under the authority and guidance of the Conference of the Parties. |
| GTZ | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH (German Agency for Technical Cooperation) |
| ICARDA | International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas |
| ICRISAT | International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| IIWG | Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group In July, 2006, the Parties to the UNCCD established an intersessional intergovernmental working group (IIWG) to develop a ten-year strategic plan and framework for implementation of the Convention by addressing, among things, the JIU report's recommendations. The IIWG is to complete its work by June 1, 2007, and submit its conclusions to the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP8). |
| InWEnt | Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung gGmbH (Capacity Building International, Germany) |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, established 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Its role is to assess scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant for the understanding of climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation. The first volume of its Fourth Assessment Report, "Climate Change 2007", appeared in February, 2007. |
| IUCN | International Union for the Conservation of Nature |
| JIU | Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations JIU, set up in 1958, is the only independent external oversight body of the United Nations system mandated to conduct evaluations, inspections and investigations of all UN bodies and specialised agencies. The JIU published its report on UNCCD in 2005. |
| KfW | Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (The German Development Bank) |
| Kyoto treaty | Officially known as the Kyoto Protocol, an amendment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It assigns ratifying countries mandatory targets for the reduction in the emission of six greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide. The Kyoto treaty opened for signature in December 1997, in Kyoto, Japan, and entered into force in February 2005. As of December 2006, 169 nations and other governmental entities had signed the Kyoto Protocol. Most industrialised nations, with the notable exception of the USA, have also ratified it, thereby agreeing to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, between the years 2008-2012, of an average of 6 to 8% below 1990 levels. For more information, see http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php and also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyoto_Protocol |
| LDC | Least Developed Countries. Term introduced by the UN in 1971 for the poorest, or least-developed countries which, due to their status, are granted special terms and conditions, including for financial aid, in international development cooperation. |
| Mainstreaming | Systematic integration and connection of certain contents and/or issues with all relevant areas of policy and action. |
| MDG(s) | Millennium Development Goal(s) |
| NAP | National Action Programme |

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| NePAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization Many relevant NGOs attend inter-governmental meetings as observers in order to interact with delegates and the press and provide information. Within the UNCCD process, they dispose of a full slot in the plenary of the COP of at least two half-day sessions. NGOs must be non-profit and can include environmental groups, research institutions and business groups. |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| Participation | In the context of development cooperation this term embraces all aspects of the active involvement of the population in the development process, including political participation, social involvement and active sharing in decision-making, planning and implementing processes. |
| Party or Parties | A Party to the Convention is a state or regional economic integration organisation (such as the EU) that agrees to be bound by the Convention and for which the CCD has entered into force. |
| PRSP | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper |
| RAP | Regional Action Programme |
| Soil salinisation | Salt accumulation in surface soil due to intense evaporation of groundwater. In drylands this is a typical example of soil degradation. |
| SRAP | Sub-regional Action Programme |
| Thermohaline conveyor | An ocean current driven by density, which is determined by the heat (<i>thermo-</i>) and salt (<i>-haline</i>) of sea water. Thermohaline circulation has a large climactic impact, transporting both energy (in the form of heat) and matter (solids, dissolved substances and gases) around the globe. |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCBD | United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity |
| UNCCD | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification |
| UNCED | United Nations Conference on Environment and Development |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |

Parties to the Convention

(as at 11 October 2005)

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|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Afghanistan | China | Guatemala | Mali | Romania | Tunisia |
| Albania | Colombia | Guinea | Malta | Russian Federation | Turkey |
| Algeria | Comoros | Guinea-Bissau | Marshall Islands | Rwanda | Turkmenistan |
| Andorra | Congo | Guyana | Mauritania | Saint Kitts and Nevis | Tuvalu |
| Angola | Cook Islands | Haiti | Mauritius | Saint Lucia | Uganda |
| Antigua and Barbuda | Costa Rica | Honduras | Mexico | Saint Vincent and the Grenadines | Ukraine |
| Argentina | Côte d'Ivoire | Hungary | Micronesia (Federated States of) | Samoa | United Arab Emirates |
| Armenia | Croatia | Iceland | Monaco | San Marino | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland |
| Australia | Cuba | India | Mongolia | Sao Tome and Principe | United Republic of Tanzania |
| Austria | Cyprus | Indonesia | Morocco | Saudi Arabia | United States of America |
| Azerbaijan | Czech Republic | Iran (Islamic Republic of) | Mozambique | Senegal | Uruguay |
| Bahamas | Democratic People's Republic of Korea | Ireland | Myanmar | Seychelles | Uzbekistan |
| Bahrain | Democratic Republic of the Congo | Israel | Namibia | Sierra Leone | Vanuatu |
| Bangladesh | Denmark | Italy | Nauru | Singapore | Venezuela |
| Barbados | Djibouti | Jamaica | Nepal | Slovakia | Viet Nam |
| Belarus | Dominica | Japan | Netherlands | Slovenia | Yemen |
| Belgium | Dominican Republic | Jordan | New Zealand | Solomon Islands | Zambia |
| Belize | Ecuador | Kazakhstan | Nicaragua | Somalia | Zimbabwe |
| Benin | Egypt | Kenya | Niger | South Africa | |
| Bhutan | El Salvador | Kiribati | Nigeria | Spain | |
| Bolivia | Equatorial Guinea | Kuwait | Niue | Sri Lanka | |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | Eritrea | Kyrgyzstan | Norway | Sudan | |
| Botswana | Ethiopia | Lao People's Democratic Republic | Oman | Suriname | |
| Brazil | European Community | Latvia | Pakistan | Swaziland | |
| Brunei Darussalam | Fiji | Lebanon | Panama | Sweden | |
| Bulgaria | Finland | Lesotho | Papua New Guinea | Switzerland | |
| Burkina Faso | France | Liberia | Paraguay | Syrian Arab Republic | |
| Burundi | Gabon | Libyan Arab Jamahiriya | Peru | Tajikistan | |
| Cambodia | Gambia | Liechtenstein | Philippines | Thailand | |
| Cameroon | Georgia | Lithuania | Poland | The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia | |
| Canada | Germany | Luxembourg | Portugal | Timor Leste | |
| Cape Verde | Ghana | Madagascar | Qatar | Togo | |
| Central African Republic | Greece | Malawi | Republic of Korea | Tonga | |
| Chad | Grenada | Malaysia | Republic of Moldova | Trinidad and Tobago | |
| Chile | | Maldives | | | |



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